JLR:HLS:mid 5/21/64
RET: JLR:HLW:al 5/22/64

MAY 25 1964

Mr. Richard Helms
Deputy Director for Plans
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 2505

Dear Mr. Helms:

In connection with the discussions recently had with Mr. Abram Chayes, the Legal Adviser to the Department of State, Mr. Chayes has indicated the Commission that members of the Department of State have informed him that at the time Lee Harvey Oswald received his tourist visa in other words from the Soviet Embassy in Helsinki, Finland, at least a week ordinarily transpired between the time when the tourist applied for his visa and the issuance of that visa. If this is true, then the fact that Lee Harvey Oswald obtained his tourist visa in from two to four days may have some significance.

From material previously supplied to the Commission by the Central Intelligence Agency we have concluded that Oswald arrived in Helsinki on an airplane from London on October 10, 1959, that his Soviet tourist visa was issued from the Embassy in Helsinki on October 14, and that he departed for Russia on a train on October 15. Assuming that he applied for a visa the same day he arrived in Helsinki, four days were required for him to obtain the visa. If, however, his airplane arrived too late on October 10 for him to reach the Soviet Embassy and apply for a visa that same day, he probably would have had to wait until Sunday, October 11, to tender his application. We have no information on the probable time of arrival of his flight or the closing time of the Embassy, so we cannot estimate whether he had sufficient time to get from the airport to the Embassy before it closed on Saturday, October 10.

cc: Mr. Rankin
Mr. Willens
Mr. Slawson

We have already asked that the Department of State look further into this matter and give us its best opinion regarding the average time required to obtain a Soviet tourist visa from Helsinki in October 1959 and also the regularity or lack of regularity evidenced by the Soviet Embassy in this regard. We are of course interested in the question of the regularity of procedures because we want to know whether, if Oswald did in fact obtain his visa more quickly than was normal, his doing so was significant, or whether it may have been only the result of a non-infringent deviation from normal procedure.

If it is still possible at this time to determine the approximate hour on October 10, 1959 when Oswald's flight arrived in Helsinki and the hour when the Soviet Embassy closed, this information, plus an estimate of the time required to travel from the airport to the Embassy by commercial transportation, would also be of assistance to the Commission.

Sincerely,

J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel